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SKETCH of the Life and Char-  
acter of Roger Minott Sherman  
New Haven, 1846.



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.













ROGER SHERMAN

Roger M. Sherman

S K E T C H  
OF THE  
LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

HON. ROGER MINOTT SHERMAN.

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HON. ROGER MINOTT SHERMAN.

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THE death of this distinguished man, spread a peculiar sensation throughout the wide sphere of his fame. The death of all worthy men is indeed lamented as far as their character is known, and their influence felt. This grief deepens and extends itself, in proportion to the importance of the stations they have worthily filled, the good they have accomplished, the fair fame they have won. But beyond the sacred enclosure of private friendship, these feelings quickly give way to the conviction that others will soon be raised up to fill their places ; that the wheels of society will move onward without material hindrances, and not want fit instruments for propelling them forward in their proper course. But there is an order of men, " few and far between," whose departure diffuses a degree of sorrow, which is not fully assuaged by such reflections. They are the men of real greatness, whose equals we rarely see, and who, in their generation, shine as suns amid the lesser lights of the intellectual sky. Others may arise in their place, to be the leaders and supports of the people, the strong pillars and ornaments of the church and the state. But every really great man has qualities, or a com-

bination of qualities, which are peculiarly his own : which are singular, unique, inimitable, and shed about him a sort of luster and fragrance, which is altogether unrivaled. They who have been wont to admire this " individuality of genius," look in vain for any thing twin to it in any other person, however eminent or peerless in his own way ; and when it vanishes, they are disconsolate in their grief, never expecting to behold again the same combination of intellectual and moral qualities.

Judge Sherman was one of that sort of men, whose death has widely diffused this species of sorrow. Although we may see his equals or superiors, yet we do not expect again to see greatness in the same shape and aspects, exhibiting the same hues and proportions in every part, the same principles, manners and habits, in a like majestic and venerable person. As it is our instinct, in such a case, to perpetuate the external figure in such a faint image as art can impress upon the lifeless canvass, so we endeavor to give a posthumous duration to his intellectual and moral greatness, by sketching its features to the best of our ability, in definite and enduring records. The feeling that such a

tribute is due to the high qualities of Mr. Sherman, and will profit those who survive him, is as just, as it is widely extended beyond the circle of private friendship. We propose, therefore, to present a condensed view of his character, and such an analysis of the elements and sources of his strength, as the space we can consistently allot to this purpose will permit.

The Hon. ROGER MINOTT SHERMAN was the son of the Rev. Josiah and Martha Sherman. He was born at Woburn, Mass., May 22, 1773, and was the youngest of six children. His father was brother to the Hon. Roger Sherman of revolutionary celebrity, who will ever be illustrious as one of the most eminent of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was in the fourth generation of descent from Capt. John Sherman who emigrated from Dedham, England, to Watertown Mass., about the year 1635. His mother was daughter of the Hon. James Minott, of Concord, Mass., a man of eminence in his day. She was in the fifth line of descent from George Minott who came from England, and was one of the first settlers of Dorchester, Mass., and a ruling elder in the church planted there. The unsettled and tumultuous state of society during the Revolution, rendered the situation of many clergymen precarious and unsettled. The father of the subject of this notice came to Milford in this state in 1775, and was for some time pastor of the second church in that town. He thence removed to Goshen, and for some years ministered to the church in that place. He finally settled in Woodbridge, and continued in the ministry there the residue of his days. These changes occurring during the childhood and youth of his son, the latter, of course, accompanied him through these migrations. We have no knowledge that during this period of his life he exhibited

any peculiar traits or indications, or that any events occurred respecting him worthy of record. It must indeed have been apparent, that his mind was of a superior order. Nor did he contract any habits unfriendly to intellectual growth and culture. His character was unstained by vice. He had the stimulus of judicious parental training, and, what is often still more effective, of poverty, to make the most of his faculties and opportunities.

In 1789, when sixteen years old, he entered the Sophomore class in Yale College. Six weeks afterwards his father died, leaving his family destitute, as his salary had barely been adequate to his support. But it is seldom that any obstacles or difficulties can arrest or prevent the education of a first rate mind. A kind Providence will usually conspire with its own resolute determination, and untiring efforts to surmount all obstacles, and give it the advantage of the most perfect discipline and culture. His uncle, Roger Sherman, of illustrious memory, received him into his family, and aided him to the extent of his ability. During the last two years of his academic course, he resorted to teaching in New Haven, in order to obtain the means of defraying his expenses. But he so arranged the hours of his school, that it did not prevent his regular and punctual attendance on all the College exercises, nor his maintaining a high rank as a scholar.

After the completion of his academic course, he immediately commenced the study of law. For this purpose he placed himself under the tuition of the most celebrated jurist in the state, and contrived, meanwhile, to support himself by teaching. For the first two years after his graduation, he taught an academy in Windsor, and studied law with the Hon. Oliver Ellsworth, who was among the greatest of the great men of that period, and for

some time Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. He next studied in the office of the late Judge Reeve, of Litchfield, and paid his current expenses by teaching a common school.

But superior talent can not long be cramped for want of reasonable facilities for its full development. In March, 1795, he was chosen tutor in Yale College, and became the instructor of the class that graduated in 1797. He continued the study of law under the Hon. Simeon Baldwin, who still survives his distinguished pupil. He retained his tutorship until May of the following year, when, having been a short time previous admitted to the bar in New Haven, he resigned the office, and located himself as a practicing lawyer at Norwalk, Conn. In the office of tutor, he displayed decisive tokens of those high qualities and endowments, which raised him to subsequent fame. He succeeded the late Judge Gould in the charge of the class which he instructed. The elegant scholarship, the lucid logic, the exquisite taste, the rhetorical finish, as well as the urbane and graceful manners, for which this gentleman was distinguished, are still remembered by many of our readers. It was, therefore, a somewhat hazardous position for a new incumbent, unless he was thoroughly furnished for his place. In the following sketch of Mr. Sherman's career as tutor, communicated by a member of the class under his tuition to Rev. Dr. Cooley of Granville, Mass., we see that those same qualities of mind and heart, which made him eminent through life, made him so in this station. "His first appearance, owing to his extreme modesty, was not imposing. To say that he was unassuming, is not saying the whole truth. He seemed *diffident* to a degree hardly compatible with a station which required the exercise of authority, as well as the communication of instruction. No dispo-

sition, however, was at any time manifested to make a comparison with his predecessor in office disadvantageous to the new incumbent; and, in a short time, it was found that none could be made. Such was his perfect acquaintance with the studies of his pupils, his elevated and comprehensive views, and his clear and happy method of giving instruction, combined with the unfeigned friendliness of his manner, that his influence operated as efficiently and more benignly than any exercise of authority could have done. He encouraged much oftener than he reproved; but when reproof was necessary, he administered it in such a manner as to leave the subject of it more his friend than he was before. He remained in this situation somewhat more than a year, enjoying the entire confidence of the trustees of the College, and of his associates in the faculty, the affections of his pupils, and the respect of all."

During his tutorship he joined the church in Yale College. As this was the period when his religious opinions and feelings became settled, and took that determinate and fundamental bias which they retained through life, it is proper to record, briefly, what is known of his history in relation to this subject. We have every reason for believing that, during his childhood and youth, he enjoyed the wisest Christian training and nurture, and was surrounded by the most pure and propitious Christian influence. His father was an able and popular minister of the old New England stamp. His mother was a lady of rare strength of mind and excellence of character. It could scarcely be otherwise than that such parents should, in the most judicious and effective way, bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That they did so, we infer from the high Christian character of their children, from the reverential man-

ner in which Mr. Sherman was wont to allude to them; and still more decisively, from the fact that his piety was of that solid, symmetrical, discriminating cast, which rarely appears in one who has not "from a child known the Holy Scriptures." One of his sisters married the Rev. Justus Mitchell, of New Canaan, an excellent minister, who, like many of the most eminent clergymen of that period, obtained a portion of his support by teaching. While preparing for College, and subsequently during his vacations, until he was settled in life, Mr. Sherman was much in his family. In the family of his uncle, also, and while studying law, he was under the influence of the highest models of Christian character, of men who were pillars and ornaments of the church as well as the state. But at this portentous period, when the shock of the French revolution agitated, and the poison of French infidelity tainted the whole civilized world, the infection spread extensively in this country. Infidelity was fast growing into fashion with young men of rank and education. Multitudes thought the profession of it to be essential to a reputation for intellectual independence, and the only way of escaping the reproach of mental servility and vulgarity. Another cause of the prevalence of this spirit, was the general depravation of the public mind by the protracted war of the Revolution. But to whatever cause it may have been due, infidelity had at this period a most disastrous prevalence in Yale College. Says Prof. Kingsley, in his life of Dr. Dwight, "the degree to which it prevailed may be conjectured from the following fact. A considerable proportion of the class which he (Dr. Dwight) first taught, had assumed the names of the principal English and French infidels, and were more familiarly known by them than by their own." As Dr. Dwight became president shortly af-

ter Mr. Sherman became tutor, it is clear that the whole education of the latter must have been pursued in the midst of this pestilential atmosphere. Nor was he wholly unaffected by it. Although he was never swerved from his habitual purity of life and manners, yet he was for a time, during his collegiate course or soon afterwards, shaken by the ingenious sophistry of Hume; a writer who by his precision and perspicuity of style, his dialectic skill and subtilty, was peculiarly fitted to awaken the admiration of a youthful mind, in which the logical faculty was predominant. But this skeptical aberration was transient. It put him in a position so uncongenial with the whole structure and genius of his mind, with the whole scope of his early impressions, his tastes and predilections, that he could no more be held to it than a sturdy oak momentarily bent from its upright attitude by a tornado. He soon found in studying Edwards, that a profounder metaphysical sagacity than Hume's had been brought to the support and triumphant vindication of divine truth. Dr. Dwight, too, no sooner took charge of the College, than he put forth his gigantic strength in battling and crushing the rampant deism which prevailed among the students. Of his eloquent discourses then delivered on this subject, we have often heard Mr. Sherman express the most fervent admiration. His original religious opinions returned with new strength of conviction. He was not only confirmed in his belief of them, but he felt their truth experimentally. They were impressed on him "with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He became in the judgment of charity a true Christian. He made profession of his faith by joining the College church, and through a long life held fast his profession, a shining example of Christian excellence. But we will not dwell on this subject, as we shall

revert to it again when we come to give an estimate of his whole character, after having completed the narrative of the chief events of his life.

He was married to Miss Elizabeth Gould, Dec. 13, 1796. She was the daughter of Doctor William Gould, formerly of Branford, but at that time of New Haven, and sister of the late Hon. James Gould of Litchfield. With this gifted and estimable lady, who still lives to mourn his loss, he was united for near half a century, in the enjoyment of great conjugal and domestic happiness, terminated only by his death. The only issue of the marriage was two sons, born Oct. 18, 1799. Their names were James Minott, and William Gould. They were children of extraordinary promise, and had no blight overtaken them, we know not why the celebrity of the father would not have been perpetuated in his sons. They both displayed from infancy rare intellectual and moral qualities. They were conscientious, and had a religious and devotional turn to a degree seldom witnessed in childhood. They showed uncommon brilliancy, vigor, and buoyancy of mind, a strong love of study, of the exact sciences, and of elegant literature. But in God's mysterious providence, they were both smitten, before the high hopes which they reasonably excited could be realized.

James M. had progressed in his studies with remarkable rapidity till the age of fifteen, when he became the subject of strong religious impressions. Owing to an unfortunate circumstance which occurred at an important crisis in his spiritual exercises, they degenerated into a fixed and incurable melancholy. This at length disordered and consumed his mind, till it issued in decided insanity. After medical skill had done its utmost, the distemper still remained, with occasional abatements and lucid intervals. It was during one of these intervals that

he entered the class in Yale College which graduated in 1825. He was obliged by a recurrence of his malady to take a dismission before the close of his Freshman year; but while he remained, we understand, on the testimony of one of his classmates, that he stood without a rival among them, especially in the department of mathematics. Almost daily he engaged, at the recitations, in discussions with his tutor upon principles and methods of solving arithmetical and algebraical questions altogether beyond the apprehension of most of his classmates. This was a decisive test of what he would have become, if he had retained unimpaired for life the original powers of his mind. He died in Bloomingdale Asylum, Aug. 8, 1833. Those who knew him best had the highest confidence in his Christian character, and that, having put off this tabernacle in which he groaned, being burdened, he was clothed upon with the shining robes of immortality. Thus those parental hopes which had been raised to the highest pitch were blasted. In place of them arose a long and severe trial of his parents' faith, patience, and resignation. But they had this consolation to assuage their grief over his untimely decay, that he was endowed with a portion superior to all worldly riches, a glory resplendent above all earthly honors.

William G. died at Fairfield, Aug. 15, 1838. He was early prostrated in a manner different from his brother, but still not less peculiar and afflictive. When four years old, he was seized with epileptic fits. These returned upon him periodically till his death. They produced a gradual, at first imperceptible, but in the end decisive decay of his bodily and mental powers. He was never insane. He was rather enfeebled and paralyzed as to the operations of his mind. He united with the church in Fairfield in 1815. His

first religious impressions can not be traced to any assignable date. From infancy he exhibited a conscientious fear of God, which never forsook him, and signs of true piety which brightened until the day of his death. The most skeptical never doubted his piety, however rudely they might stigmatize the generality of Christians as hypocrites. His conceptions of Christian truth and duty were remarkably just, exact, and discriminating. His conscience was tender and scrupulous to a degree almost morbid. In his case, the new creature in Christ remained sound, healthy, and entire, amid the total wreck of his natural powers. In death he doubtless departed to be with Christ, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Thus, the untimely blight of these sons of promise, came with the alleviations of hope, and parental grief was softened by the bright prospects of the beloved dead.

In 1807 Mr. Sherman transferred his residence from Norwalk to Fairfield, where he remained till his death. Here he was a chief pillar in church and society. He exercised a powerful and beneficent influence in all ecclesiastical, civil and social concerns. He shed a dignity and luster over the society of the place, and gave importance and fame to the town and county.

He had practiced law but a short time before his eminence in his profession was universally felt and admitted. Nor would it have been otherwise, had he begun his career in any age or country. He brought to the bar an extraordinary combination of qualities for success. His mind was of the highest order—distinguished for logical acuteness, elastic energy, and indefatigable application. His person was dignified and commanding. His elocution was sonorous, graceful, and impressive. His manners courteous and winning. His life was unsullied, and his character not only unim-

peachable, but of great weight. His fidelity to his clients and devotion to his cases, were thorough and unvarying. Hence he forthwith rose to the first rank in his profession, and before his death was confessedly without an equal as a practitioner at law in his own state. His business rapidly increased, till in his own and other counties of the state, and in great cases in other states, he was tasked to the full extent of his abilities. In this practice he continued through life, except when withdrawn from it to official stations, or prevented by sickness.

In politics, Mr. Sherman belonged to the school of Washington, Jay, Hamilton, Ellsworth, and his illustrious uncle. While men of this stamp were ascendant in Connecticut, he was rising in political distinction as rapidly as in the legal profession. While yet young, he was summoned to important public stations, and honored with the respect and confidence of the leading statesmen of that period; being regarded by them as a rising star of the first magnitude. In 1814 he was chosen a member of the upper branch of the legislature—a body then composed of our most able statesmen. Few elective bodies have so seldom changed their members. Whoever was once elected to it, retained his place until he forfeited it by mal-conduct, or was raised to a higher office. And in those days, a nice regard was had to merit in the allotment of these and all other public offices. When this is the fact, a senate of twelve, virtually permanent, is sure to be composed of the most gifted men. In illustration of the scrupulous regard which was had to actual merit in the popular election of senators, we have often heard Mr. Sherman say, that of the whole number nominated, there was one man who at each election for several years was almost but not quite elected; and this exactly represented his actual

merit in comparison with his rival candidates. And whatever may be said of other changes, it will hardly be claimed, that in this respect, political measures have since changed for the better. Mr. Sherman remained in this body until 1818, when the present state Constitution was adopted, the federal party was prostrated, its leaders for a time ostracized, or virtually branded as ineligible to official stations. While he was a member of the legislature, he displayed such a devotion to the true interests of the state, such ability in striking out, drafting and advocating important measures; in short, such high statesmanship, that he at once took the first rank among his associates. At this time he was compelled by his private circumstances to decline a nomination to Congress which his political friends proposed to procure for him. Although yet young, he was chosen by the legislature a member of the convention of delegates of the New England states, which convened at Hartford in 1814. He drafted the report of the committee of the legislature, recommending a delegation to that convention, an able and eloquent document. No convention that ever assembled in this country has met at a more appalling crisis, or upon weightier business. The predominant party in New England was thoroughly alarmed, and sent to it none but her most gifted and trusted men. Whatever may be thought of the doings and tendency of that convention, into which we have at present no space to inquire, the patriotic and honorable designs of such men as Mr. Sherman can not be questioned. In this body he displayed that assiduity, penetration, wisdom in deliberation, and eloquence in debate, for which he had previously established a reputation. The public have had reason to deplore and abhor the rancor of party feeling which strove to make membership in this convention a re-

proach, and drove many of the excellent and gifted men who composed it from the future service of their country in those public stations for which they were qualified. In this way Mr. Sherman was deprived of many marks of public favor which none could deny his title to; but the state was the greatest sufferer.

Notwithstanding this obstacle to his political advancement, Mr. Sherman's integrity and purity, commanding intellect, and impressive eloquence, won for him among the pure and intelligent portion of the people a high degree of confidence, admiration, and celebrity, and raised him to some honorable official distinctions. His own town, though of opposite politics, occasionally, when important interests were pending, elected him as its representative in the legislature. Towards the close of his life, in May, 1839, he was chosen by the legislature an associate judge of the Supreme Court of the state. During the same session, he was earnestly supported as a candidate for the United States senate; and it is believed that if he had fully harmonized with the dominant party on some prominent points of public policy, he would have been elected. We have often heard it observed by those qualified to judge, that in this body his rank would have been scarcely inferior to that of Calhoun, Clay, and Webster, had he like them devoted the most of his life to the affairs of state. He filled the office of judge with signal and preëminent ability, as his printed opinions in volumes 13th and 14th of the Connecticut Reports abundantly show. We lament that these are the most important monuments of his mind which he has left behind him. In the spring of 1842 he resigned this office on account of ill health. He now wanted but a single year of threescore and ten. Up to this time he had never been disabled by any serious indisposition from the most arduous professional

service. But his bodily health and vigor now began to show a sensible decay. With successive alternations of prostration and recovery, he passed the residue of his days amid those genial supports and solaces, which home alone can supply to sinking and expiring nature. But while his material part decayed, his intellectual and spiritual part remained sound and unimpaired. His eye was not dim, neither was his natural force abated. His mind retained its crystal clearness and elastic vigor to the end. It showed no faltering or staggering in grappling with adversaries the most adroit and powerful, and with subjects the most intricate and mazy. It was observable also, that during this period his Christian graces were matured and brightened to an unusual luster; as we are divinely assured that the path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. He died in the serene hope of a blessed immortality, Dec. 30, 1844, at the age of seventy one years and seven months. Deep and loud was the wail of lamentation over this event, the echoes of which have not yet died away. His funeral presented a sublime and imposing spectacle. Unadorned by artificial pomp or pageantry, it was august and impressive far beyond such tinsel display. In a small rural village, in the depths of winter, an immense concourse of people gathered to pay their last and spontaneous tribute to departed greatness and worth. There were the three ministers who had been successively his pastors, officiating in the funeral solemnities. There were the dignitaries of the state, his venerable associates in professional and public life. There was the church, the ecclesiastical society, the community to which he belonged,—mourning over the loss of a chief pillar, on which they had long leaned for support. There were the humble and obscure, lamenting

the demise of one whose greatness they admired, whose goodness they revered, by whose benignity they had been cheered and allured. From the sanctuary in which he had worshiped for near forty years, the vast procession moved at the bidding of the knell to the house appointed for all the living. He was laid in the grave just as the bright sun sunk beneath the western horizon. And it was beautifully said, that the setting sun would not more certainly rise again, than the body then committed to the dust would rise on the morning of the resurrection clad in vestments of immortal splendor.

We will now attempt a brief estimate of Mr. Sherman's character and talents, as displayed in every sphere in which he moved.

To say that he had a mind of extraordinary power, is simply to say what is conceded by all who knew him. Were we to delineate its peculiar features, we should fix upon his *logical* powers as the most characteristic and prominent. This was the base on which his whole intellectual superstructure rested, and from which it derived its adamantine strength and solidity. Nothing could be more palpable to one familiar with him, than that his mind played with the greatest ease and nimbleness when it was put upon a course of direct and pure argumentation. When summoned to confront and expose ingenious sophistry, to fathom the profound, to disentangle the intricate, to unveil the occult and abstruse,—it sprang to the work without apparent effort, as a pleasure, we had almost said as a recreation. It seized the truth of which it was in quest, and threaded the mazes where sophistry had sought to hide it, with spontaneous ease and intuitive certainty. Nor was he content till he had hunted the fallacy of a deceptive argument out of all its lurking places, and

silenced his antagonist by making its absurdity palpable. He would not rest till it was clear that the argument involved some proposition so plainly false, that none could have a face to contend for it. In his positive arguments, he would seize upon some admitted and unquestionable truth, which virtually involved the point at issue, and from this truth, which perhaps at first sight would seem to many entirely irrelevant, he would by a series of steps as regular and concatenated as the demonstrations of Euclid, educe the proposition which he had undertaken to maintain. And when he thus reached his conclusion, he surprised as well as confounded his antagonist by the dexterous, rapid, unlooked for manner in which it was done. He was fond of giving to all his arguments somewhat of the air of a mathematical demonstration, in respect to certainty and palpable conclusiveness. This high logical power was conspicuous in his arguments at the bar, and gave a distinctive and characteristic hue to all the productions of his mind. In public addresses, political, religious, and benevolent, in unpretending religious exhortation, in conversation, in every attempt to impress his fellow men, his observations would invariably cast themselves into a logical or argumentative shape. He would not merely labor to produce a favorable impression in behalf of the view he was advocating, but he would endeavor to do it *by a demonstration of its truth*, by stating some admitted premise, from which he showed his views to be inevitable sequences. Or if he were laboring to impress some admitted but unfelt truth, he would still *demonstrate how and wherein* it surpassed in magnitude and importance its influence over us. This trait of his mind gave him a peculiar aptitude and fondness for metaphysical discussions, always excepting the dreamy transcendentalism of Fichte

and his successors. So far as metaphysics have been infused into theological discussions, he was at home in the dialectics of the schools, and was ready to grapple with the most astute of the metaphysico-theologians. It is needless to add, that this characteristic trait of his mind qualified him to master with ease the subtleties and intricacies, the hair-breadth distinctions and broad principles, which intermingle in the profession to which he devoted his life, and to reach an eminence in it which few are privileged to gain.

With this rare logical penetration, his mind was distinguished for that clearness in conception, thought, and reasoning, without which, however one may be an artful sophist, he can not be a good reasoner.

His mind was remarkable for the sustained vigor of its movements. Others may have surpassed him in meteoric brilliancy, or occasional displays of unnatural, spasmodic energy. Few could equal him in the steady, unflagging, never-failing vigor of his mental operations. His powers never faltered or grew weary under any degree of pressure. However intense had been his application to the most perplexing or wearisome cases, however fatigued or debilitated in body, his mind never lost or relaxed its tone, its buoyancy, its activity. After the most exhausting application, it was still unexhausted, and would spring instantly to any subject set before it.

Hence he had an unusual power of intense and protracted application. As in his case study was not wearisome or oppressive, so it was habitual, thorough, and uninterrupted. He could hold his mind in patient and fixed attention to any subject until he had mastered it. Nor did he fail to put this talent to use. This mental trait is so essential to success and eminence, that without it all his other gifts would have been abortive.

The imagination, though not

strongly developed, was yet in due proportion in the structure of his mind. That he had no strong taste for the poetical and fanciful, is beyond a doubt. That a higher measure of what Wordsworth calls "the vision and faculty divine," would have given to his mind greater ardor and brilliancy, to his eloquence a more impassioned and glowing fervor,—that thus his logic would oftener have been so heated as not only to enlighten and convince, but to kindle and melt,—is not improbable. But still, this faculty was ever ready and fertile enough to supply an ample stock of apposite illustrations, which added clearness and cogency to his arguments. To any higher development of it, the whole nature of legal practice is unpropitious.

But if there was any thing here which minute criticism would detect, it was rarely felt, for its place was supplied by another quality, which he possessed in a remarkable degree; we mean a confidence in the truth of what he advocated, almost amounting to enthusiasm, and in his ability to render that truth evident and conspicuous to others. Hence he became earnest and ardent in his manner of speaking, and commonly threw into his speeches the fervid glow, the vehement, impetuous, overwhelming movement, of impassioned eloquence; and often would rise and swell from the even current of his logic, till he overflowed all the artificial embankments of rhetorical precision, and swept away all obstacles like a cataract. In this he was aided by his ready command of a rich, classical, sonorous diction. His preparations for public speaking seldom if ever extended to the language he used. But it was because he was never at a loss for choice, exact, and felicitous words without it. Nor was this a merely natural or fortuitous gift. It was the effect of thorough intellectual discipline,

and of assiduous culture. He was in early life a fine classical scholar, and never lost his relish and admiration for those great "masters of sentences," the Latin and Greek classics. He had carefully studied some of the English authors most distinguished for perspicuity, terseness, and elegance of style. Probably most who have been accustomed to hear him, would say that he generally stood alone among his associate practitioners, in uniformly sustaining a chaste, dignified, and fluent diction. If we might assign it to any distinct order of style, we should pronounce it Ciceronian, it was so free and flowing, yet polished and accurate.

To the utterance of such a diction, his voice was remarkably fitted. Its articulation was easy and distinct, its tones full, clear, and melodious. When it was attuned to the right pitch, and inspired by his kindling interest in his subject, its discourse was music. And as the fire burned within him, it waked him to that energy and emphasis in tone and gesture which are inseparable from genuine eloquence. Nor was the effect of the whole unaided by his dignified and impressive personal appearance; which in his countenance and whole bodily figure was lofty and commanding. It bespoke the man himself, whose qualities were translucent through it.

He was not incapable of humor and satire, with exquisite sallies of which he sometimes enlivened his addresses, and so relieved by a gay and sprightly turn, the sturdy march of his logic. This power however he used sparingly, and seldom with severity, except in way of retort; when its salient flashes were struck from him by this sort of collision, they were often consuming and fatal. When, in reply to an opponent, he had said, "you might as easily split a hair as make such a distinction," and that opponent sportively held up one plucked from his own head partially bisected, he re-

joined, "I did not say a bristle, sir."

He did not confine his studies to his own profession. He liberalized his mind by an acquaintance with the sciences and arts generally; especially such as could be made tributary to his profession. He often astonished and delighted men of other professions, as he exhibited to them the extent and accuracy of his knowledge in their respective departments. In cases at court, which could be elucidated by exhibiting the principles of any science, he seldom failed to show his advantage. Hence, he was peculiarly successful and eminent in patent cases, and in all cases depending on the principles of medical jurisprudence. From his frequent employment in patent cases, and consequent examination of the ingenious inventions of the country, he became deeply interested in the application of science to the arts. He exhibited a high talent for mechanical inventions. Had he been a practical mechanic, we have no doubt he would have distinguished and enriched himself in this way. Within the last ten years he invented a steam engine which produced a rotary, without the intervention of a reciprocating motion. Although it has never been sufficiently perfected for practical purposes, it may yet prove to be an invention of great and lasting utility.

As a JURIST, we have pretty fully described him in the portrait we have already drawn of the qualities of his mind. Indeed his intellectual were so blended with his legal productions, that it was hardly possible to portray the qualities of his mind, without giving his traits as a lawyer. It may be added, that these high endowments raised him to an eminence almost peerless in every department of legal practice. He was great as a counsellor, great in pleas before the jury, and in pleas before court. But it should be observed also, that his greatness ap-

peared just in proportion to the difficulties and perplexities he had to encounter. He proportioned his efforts to the magnitude and difficulties of his case. He said but little when little need be said, and showed his greatness by knowing and stopping when he had said enough—a habit which many of our public speakers would do well to learn. It was only in abstruse and complicated questions of law that his full strength appeared, and that his extraordinary logical powers were brought into full exercise. Here he most excelled, and was most unrivalled. To unravel knotty points, to educe some great principle from a chaos of decisions, to trace to its origin, or analyze into its elements, a doctrine of law which seemed adverse to him, were processes as easy to him as multiplication and division in arithmetic. His acumen, penetration, and ready mastery of the most involved cases, together with his great legal learning, industry, fairness, integrity, his commanding person, and courteous manners, rendered him an illustrious ornament of the bench, to which he was finally elevated.

In the practice of the law his course was marked by the strictest integrity, by fidelity to his clients, and fidelity to his own conscience. He has stated his principles thus:

*"I have ever considered it as one of the first moral duties of a lawyer, and have always adopted it as a maxim in my own practice, never to encourage a groundless suit, or a groundless defense; and to dissuade a client from attempting either of them in compliance with his animosities, or with the honest prepossessions of his own judgment; and I ever deemed it a duty in a doubtful case, to point to every difficulty, and so far as I could, discourage unreasonable anticipations of success."*

In the dignity and suavity of his manners, and his courteous deportment towards court, jury, parties,

and witnesses, he was a model for imitation. But we pass to speak of his qualities as a statesman.

We confess some embarrassment in attempting to do justice to our subject in this particular, owing to the fact that party influence almost wholly excluded Mr. Sherman from the public councils during that whole period of his life in which his intellect had reached its maturity, and his fame its zenith. He was of that order and style of men that were ascendant in a former generation, and have almost wholly disappeared from the present. If an occasional specimen of them remains, he is like the solitary oak, that stands in solemn grandeur after the whole surrounding forest has been cut away. At this day, no man is a statesman, who is not also a politician; by which we mean, that all who are called to conduct public affairs, are obliged to engage more or less in schemes either corrupt or incorrupt, and attend to a systematic machinery of party politics, without which, it has come to pass within the last twenty years, that no man can get or keep an office of state. Before this, capability, fitness and fidelity were the great requisites for gaining office. These are not indeed without their influence now. But it can not be denied that party tactics, personal maneuvers, and adroit expedients, to say nothing of base intrigues and unscrupulous frauds, often overpower merit in political contests, and that they have a more powerful and disastrous influence than formerly, in conferring places of honor and emolument on the unworthy. Until mankind become vastly better than they now are, this management and plotting to get office, often sinking to the most desperate profligacy, is likely to prove an evil inherent in popular governments, to be patiently endured rather than suffer the greater evils of an hereditary monarchy. With all this modern, yet well nigh indis-

pensable scaffolding of political elevation, Mr. Sherman had no sympathy, and in it he could take no part. His training, habits, tastes and moral feelings revolted from it —so much so, that had he attempted the artifices of vulgar politicians, he would have been awkward and unsuccessful. This was one cause of his exclusion from political office, while a large portion of intelligent, virtuous people felt that, above all other men in Connecticut, he was entitled to a seat in the Senate of the United States, and that in this position he would have been an honor to the state, and a blessing to the nation. Indeed, anterior to this new state of things, when personal merit was a sufficiently buoyant cause of political elevation, Mr. Sherman was rapidly rising to a point from which he could have commanded any office in the gift of the state.

Thus excluded from political offices, which he did not covet but rather shunned, and absorbed in the practice of law, Mr. Sherman, during the ripest portion of his life, was in no situation to develop and exhibit his powers of statesmanship. And yet, by whatever untoward circumstances true genius may be cramped, there is an elastic, irrepressible energy in it, which

“Can not but by annihilating, die.”

His mind was much employed, and his influence greatly felt, upon the legislation of his own state. For more than twenty five years he attended the legislature as an advocate before the committees, that matured and shaped the business of the session. He also framed a great number of important bills, and procured their adoption by the legislature. Most of these are now incorporated into the fixed and fundamental laws of the state. They relate chiefly to judicial proceedings, and are designed to remove needless formalities, hindrances and

delays, and to render the attainment of justice, cheap, certain and expeditious. We can only point to some of the more important of these, as they lie on the pages of the Statute Book, without describing their objects and bearings. They are found in the Connecticut Statute Book, edition of 1838, pp. 119, 44, 222, 66, 76, 80, 300.

He gave great attention to the subject of currency and finance. These topics of late have been extensively and unhappily mixed with party politics. Few men have studied or mastered them more thoroughly. In the great financial convulsions, which an inflated currency has inflicted on the country, he appeared before the public with plans which he had devised for remedying the evil. These plans are all based upon one fundamental principle, viz. that all increase of the currency, beyond the amount that the laws of trade would bring into the country, if paper money was unknown, is an evil, and tends to disaster and ruin. He was in favor of paper money on account of its convenience, but opposed to its use for the purpose of augmenting the currency. He was a strict bullionist. Hence he was opposed to every scheme for the emission of paper money, which did not provide for its prompt redemption in specie, in every possible emergency. He was opposed to all toleration of convertible paper issues, to any extent, in any crisis, or on any pretext whatever. We believe that if this principle had been adhered to in this country, the terrific, destructive and demoralizing commercial convulsions with which it has been scourged, would have been avoided: and that all future deviations from it will terminate in similar catastrophes.

In the commercial revulsion which followed the over-stimulated trade that arose after the last war, Mr. Sherman, under the signature of "Aristides," published a letter to

Mr. Crawford, then Secretary of the Treasury, in reference to the United States Bank. This institution had been so mismanaged, as to aggravate for a time the evils it was designed to cure. It had lost command of its capital by putting it out in rash accommodation loans, thus fanning the spirit of wild adventure, and reducing itself to the verge of temporary insolvency. To remedy this, Mr. Sherman, after an elaborate discussion of first principles, insisted that "two rules ought to be rigidly enforced. First, to discount no accommodation paper. Secondly, to admit no renewals, but always require full payment when the term of credit has expired."

After the great commercial explosion of 1837, he published some letters over the signature of "Franklin," to the Hon. Levi Woodbury, then Secretary of the Treasury. In these he proved that the disasters of that period arose from an enormous expansion of the currency beyond its natural limits, through the unrestrained issues of the banks. He proposed to his consideration a project of a national bank, of sufficient capital to wield a controlling influence over state institutions, guarded by ample checks against the possibility of expanding the currency beyond the demands of the laws of trade: with extraordinary provisions for the safety of stockholders, and with securities for bill-holders and other creditors, which could fail only in the event of the dissolution of the government. We can not here present the details. These letters attracted much attention.

During the session of Congress 1841-2, he drafted a "Plan for the safe keeping and disbursement of the public revenue, for a uniform currency, and for facilitating exchanges in the United States." It was placed in the hands of the Chairmen of the Finance Committees of the Senate and House. It was the

basis of the plans which they reported to their respective branches of Congress. But they encumbered it with so many additions and alterations, that it was divested of its original simplicity. Early in the next session he published his Plan, over the signature of "Franklin," with an elaborate exposition and vindication of it, and of the various points in which it differed from either of the projects submitted in the reports made at the previous session. It was extensively published in the leading journals of both political parties, and was much commended by moderate men on all sides. It aimed at a compromise between the two parties. It met the great demand of one party for a sound national paper currency and medium of exchanges; and of the other, for a strictly specie standard, and for the custody of the public revenues in a governmental depository, without the aid of banks. "Severely simple in its provisions," as it was well described to be, much applauded in all quarters, and little objected to, yet such was the then exasperated and chaotic state of parties, that no exchequer or fiscal project could be adopted. It of course failed. But it was no small satisfaction to its author, that the changes which Sir Robert Peel has since introduced into the Bank of England, were based upon the same fundamental principles.

Mr. Sherman believed that the greatest dangers of our republic arise from the immense and constantly augmenting patronage at the disposal of the President of the United States. In his view, this strikes into parties their deepest taint of corruption, and kindles the most desolating fires of political contention. To abridge this patronage was with him an object to be coveted and sought, as beyond all others essential to the welfare and perpetuity of the republic. In 1840, he addressed a letter on this subject

through the public journals, over the signature of "Patrick Henry," to the Hon. Erastus Root, who had then introduced some resolutions into the New York Legislature, designed to call attention to it. In this letter, he proposed that the power of appointing all officers, except such as are the immediate agents, representatives or counselors of the President, should be taken from him and vested in a committee, chosen by lot from among the members of Congress. This he believed would staunch the evil at its source. Says he, "If the twelve thousand postmasters and the host of others who are sustained by executive bounty—with the still more numerous expectants of office, could hope to gain no personal advantages by influencing the minds of electors, that which now gives form and vigor to party power, would entirely cease, and the depths of political corruption would be dried up." The late Hon. James Hillhouse, many years since foreseeing the monstrous growth of this evil, which was then in its germ, introduced resolutions for a similar purpose into the Senate of the United States. His plan was to elect the President himself by lot, from the senior portion of the senators. But it is to be feared that the causes which render such an amendment to the Constitution necessary, will forever prevent its adoption.

Without prolonging this account of Mr. Sherman's course and opinions in respect to public affairs, we believe that it may be truly said, that as a statesman he was sagacious, patriotic and incorrupt; that he had eminent gifts for the public service, and shone with peculiar luster whenever he was summoned to it; that had he spent his life in it, he would have had few equals, and still fewer superiors; that he was too independent to cast his opinions wholly in the mould of any political party, and too upright to compromise them

for the sake of office ; that he nevertheless uniformly desired and promoted the success of one of our great political parties in preference to its rival ; and that without political preferment, he gained a public confidence and celebrity which few acquire with it.

We shall devote our remaining space to a view of his religious character ; for this thoroughly considered, includes not only his attitude and bearing towards God, but towards man, his whole private and social character.

If we were to give the more exact shades of his Christian character, we should say that it was more strongly marked by *principle* than by *feeling*. By this we mean, that it was more evident and conspicuous in his uniform and steadfast adherence to Christian truth, his conscientious and consistent discharge of Christian duty, the even tenor of his unspotted and exemplary life, than in the frequent display of exuberant and impulsive emotions. This, while it lends a grace and buoyancy to a consistent and exemplary life, is too often a monstrosity divorced from it. The longer we live, the more we value steadfast, sterling, trustworthy Christian principle, above all other manifestations of Christian character. Not that Mr. Sherman was deficient in Christian feeling. He was every way earnest and hearty. But he was not highly excitable, now in a fever of ill-balanced zeal, and now in an ague of Laodicean coldness. In his natural temperament, he was calm, steady and uniform. In his religious opinions he was clear and fixed. His scriptural and theological knowledge was extensive and profound beyond that of many divines. Hence it was to be expected that true religion would develop itself in just proportions, and with a steady and serene luster. There is abundant evidence that in all his extended intercourse and contact

with men, he left a decided impression of his religious character, and that he aimed to be governed by strict Christian principle. There was scarcely a man of eminence in the secular professions in the whole country, in regard to whom this impression was more distinct and universal, or who had a higher standing and influence in the church. This conscientious adherence to Christian principle characterized the whole man in every sphere and relation of life, and grew in strength and maturity till his death.

This principle, moreover, rested upon no sandy foundation. It rested upon the solid basis of evangelical doctrine—of the truth as it is in Jesus. He was a Calvinist of the school of Edwards and Dwight. This scheme of doctrine, which lies at the foundation of stable and consistent piety, he adopted not from traditional or any merely human authority, but from a careful study of the Scriptures. He was convinced that it is “the faith once delivered to the saints” in the oracles of God, and that it accorded with his spiritual wants and experience. Nor was he less attached to the order, than the doctrines of the communion to which he belonged, and in which he had been reared. He was a sincere and hearty Congregationalist. But while he was clear and firm in his doctrinal belief and denominational attachments, his tenacity of these things was free from all bigotry and narrowness. He had the largest catholicity. He loved all, of whatever name, who appeared to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He had an eye to discern, and a heart to rejoice in and promote whatsoever things are true, lovely and of good report in every Christian communion.

If he was a Christian, he was of course a man of prayer. But our knowledge of his habits in this respect is not, as in too many cases, limited to mere inference from his

Christian profession. He daily gathered his own household around the family altar. He was always ready, when called upon, (which was often,) to pray in the social meeting and public assembly. He was much in the habit of urging the necessity and efficacy of prayer; and gave evidence that he knew whereof he affirmed, in blessed experience.

His humility was uncommon and striking. It was the more conspicuous by contrast with that greatness, of which there was so strong a temptation to be proud. In the eyes of all, it made that greatness still greater, and gave it a finer, nobler mould. In intercourse with men greatly his inferiors, his deportment was modest and unassuming. He was benignant and affable in his demeanor towards the humblest. None were repelled—all felt welcomed and attracted to him. He loathed all arrogant and supercilious manners.

He was highly benevolent and tender in his feelings. He had a quick and strong sympathy with persons in distress, and was prompt in exertions to assuage their sufferings. In the ordinary intercourse of life he was reluctant, almost to a fault, to wound or disturb the feelings of others. For no service was more excruciating to him, than to administer the faithful wounds of a friend. Hence in society, of which he was highly fond, his manners were marked by great courtesy and amenity, as well as dignity and grace. These, united to his great conversational resources, made him an ornament and favorite in the social circle. To all worthy public, charitable, and religious objects, he gave a prompt and powerful support, by his ready and able advocacy, his great influence, and his liberal contributions. But of this we shall yet speak more distinctly.

He was distinguished for hon-

esty, fidelity, truth—in a word, for all that goes to form general uprightness of character. On all these subjects his standard was high and severe. He could not endure any deviations from them, either in himself or others. With a high and delicate sense of fidelity and honesty, he was punctilious in fulfilling every engagement and obligation, and in discharging every sort of claim which could be due from himself to others. And he thought lightly of most of the excuses by which men gloss over breaches of trust and promise, and the neglect to satisfy the reasonable claims of others. Nor did he limit the application of these views to mere pecuniary covenants and obligations; he extended them to whatever is due from one to another. His adherence to truth was no less uniform and tenacious. Nor would he compromise it for the sake of personal advantage. He would not do violence to his convictions and principles for the sake of honor and emolument. He would not swerve from his principles, or shrink from avowing and maintaining them, though assailed with a tornado of popular clamor and obloquy. He abhorred and eschewed all trick and artifice, of every sort, for catching a transient popular applause, and winning inglorious distinctions. Not that he was destitute of ambition; but it was a noble, Christian ambition. He coveted not that varnished celebrity which quickly fades and is abraded; but that golden luster which brightens with time, and under every successive ordeal.

But what we inquire after with especial interest, in the case of a great man in Israel, is his attitude and course with reference to the promotion of religion. Was his mighty influence earnestly put forth and decisively felt in advancing the cause of Christ? In this respect, Mr. Sherman was a burning and shining light, that sent its rays far

and wide. In his own church and congregation he was a chief pillar. He was ardently devoted to their welfare, and did his utmost to promote their peace, purity, and enlargement. By his counsels, his influence, his able public advocacy, his substantial pecuniary contributions, he took the lead in all measures for the promotion of religion, and of all good things. But his own church was peculiarly endeared to him, and none could more sincerely say,

*"Beyond my highest joy,  
I prize her heavenly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise."*

None were more punctual, constant and devout, in attendance upon the public worship of the Sabbath: or more glad when greeted with the summons, "let us go into the house of the Lord." If in any place his death has left an aching void, it is in his own loved sanctuary. In all humbler meetings for prayer and conference, conducted either partially or wholly by the brethren, he was a regular and delighted attendant, a prompt and mighty helper. Whenever desired, he was ready to raise his voice in prayer, and to give the word of familiar, impressive exhortation. He had an extraordinary gift for expounding the Scriptures with clearness, cogency and eloquence. If he were present and the minister were absent, there was no difficulty in sustaining all the services of a meeting, with high interest and profit. On some of these occasions, at the call of the moment, he has electrified the meeting with strains of eloquence, which he rarely surpassed in his highest efforts at the bar.

In this readiness to every good work we think him a model to professional men, many of whom, however gifted with powers of public address, shrink with morbid sensitiveness from taking any part in religious meetings. We believe,

that by a little self-denial at the outset, the service would soon cease to be self-denying; that they would find an ample compensation in their extended influence for good, and their assurance of the divine approbation.

But if his own parish was the center, it did not furnish the circumference of his Christian influence. It radiated over the county, the state, the whole country. His purity of character, his known devotion to the sacred interests of religion; his sagacity, eloquence, and acquaintance with doctrinal and ecclesiastical subjects, gave him great weight in all ecclesiastical affairs, all religious and moral movements. On these matters, he was much resorted to for counsel and aid. His very name was a tower of strength. As he was always serious in his views of all subjects, and had a strong interest in those great objects to which the clergy are professionally devoted, he was fond of their society and cultivated their acquaintance. He was widely known, beloved, and revered among them.

In regard to those great movements for spreading the Gospel and purifying the world, which have had their birth and growth during the present century, Mr. Sherman was fully imbued with that spirit in which they had their origin and support. They sprung from that diffusive spirit of Christianity which had long been dormant, but begun to be roused from its lethargy not far from the beginning of the present century. Their birth was nearly contemporaneous with his birth to newness of life. His whole religion therefore had its development and shaping in connection with them; it grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength, and was trained to a quick and active sympathy with them.

This diffusive spirit of Christianity, which had long been suffocated, has made the whole period of Mr.

Sherman's Christian life the era of revivals, missions, reforming enterprises, and of systematic agencies for circulating the Bible and diffusing Christian knowledge. From the great revival of 1740, till the opening of the present century, the American church had been in a course of constant decline. Revivals had almost wholly ceased. War had demoralized the nation. The unsettled and precarious state of the country before the adoption of the Constitution, had fostered a reckless and desperate spirit, and debauched the manners and morals of the young. All Protestant Christendom, too, had been lapsing into the same lukewarmness and degeneracy. Meanwhile infidelity waxed bold, and with infuriate malignity assailed the very being of Christianity, and marshaled its brazen legions to obliterate it from the world. The nations were convulsed with wars, and terrified with the victories and conquests, the invasions and menaces of the mighty hunter of his race. The shock of the French revolution, and the contagion of the atheistic and anarchical principles which produced it, had spread through the civilized world. Whatever was venerable, sacred and divine, began, in this as well as other lands, to be treated as a hoary abuse, and to be threatened with subversion. In this crisis, religion was reduced to its extreme depression, and the prospect in relation to it was dark and alarming. But the thickest darkness precedes and ushers in the dawn. The friends of God were alarmed. They saw all human supports and props giving way. They were driven to a reliance on that arm which is never shortened that it can not save. They were roused to extraordinary prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit. The dry bones began to move. Revivals began to appear, of great depth, frequency and continuance. Instead of an unbeliev-

ing fear of its own dissolution and prostration by the powers of darkness, the church was aroused to aggression upon their dominions, and felt that its surest means of preservation lay in unlimited expansion. It also felt that this was the surest panacea for the temporal, social, and political evils that afflict our race; the only effectual antidote to that spirit of revolution and anarchy which was then the scourge of nations. Into these views and feelings, leading Christian statesmen who had been perplexed and alarmed at the growth of that fell spirit, which they could not exorcise or control, heartily entered. Wilberforce may be taken as the leader and model of a numerous class, that were raised up at this time in Britain and this country. The inspiring idea which animated them was, that the hopes of our race for time and eternity depend upon the diffusion of pure and vital Christianity. This, in their view, was the salt of the earth. Hence they were ready to every good work. They combined with evangelical ministers in rousing the church, and inconcerting and sustaining measures for making its light to shine, and bringing its effective energies and resources to bear upon a world lying in wickedness. Mr. Sherman was one of this class of men. He imbibed this spirit in its earliest development, and was actuated by it through life. He gave his earnest and efficient aid to all trustworthy schemes and organizations for propagating the Gospel in our own and foreign lands—to all sound measures for promoting Christian morals, and for the relief of suffering humanity. He indeed repudiated with abhorrence the erratic schemes of a spurious and infidel philanthropy; that counterfeit benevolence which has been struggling to displace the true; those moral empirics and nostrums that kill when they promise to cure,

and poison instead of medicating the sources of sin and misery. Had he done otherwise, we should have ceased to revere either his greatness or his goodness. But to every solid scheme for conveying to men the blessings of the everlasting Gospel, for improving their morals and assuaging their woes, he gave his hearty and effective support. He was a principal officer in some of our most important Christian organizations; and that he was not in others, was owing to the fact, that he refused all offices to which he could not give thorough attention.

If the life of such men is a public blessing, their death is a public calamity. But our loss is their gain. It is fit that we have their characters spread out before us, not only as a just tribute to them, but for our own profit—that so we may be excited to imitate them so far as they followed Christ. And when we have traced the career of men, who were favored with extraordinary success and distinction in life to their dying moments, how does all the brilliancy of worldly glory fade away before the overshadowing luster of the immortal diadem!













































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